

REMARKS

Claims 1-6 were pending in the present application at the time of its examination. Of these claims, the Official Action confirms that Claims 3-5 define allowable subject matter and would be allowed if rewritten in independent form. As such, Claim 5 has now been rewritten in independent form so as to include the recitations of original independent Claim 1 from which it initially depended. As such, Claim 5 should be in condition for immediate allowance.

The Official Action did reject Claims 1 and 6 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated both by U.S. Patent No. 2,862,732 to Francois Guillou and U.S. Patent No. 3,674,292 to Henry W. Demler, Sr. In addition, the Official Action rejects Claim 2 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Demler '292 patent in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,221,407 to Wayne D. Steimle. As described below, independent Claim 1 has been amended to further patentably distinguish the claimed invention from the cited references. As a result of the amendment to independent Claim 1, dependent Claim 3 has also been amended for purposes of consistency. Further, new dependent Claim 7 has been added such that the present application now includes Claims 1-7. Based on the foregoing amendments and the following remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the present application and allowance of the current set of claims.

Independent Claim 1 is drawn to a method of joining and sealing conduits. The method recites mounting edge trim and a retaining element upon an end of a conduit. The edge trim has an outwardly extending ridge with the edge trim and the retaining element being mounted such that the retaining element is further from the end of the conduit than the ridge. A sleeve is extended between the conduits such that one end of the sleeve covers the ridge on the edge trim. Thereafter, the retaining element is slid over of the sleeve and toward the ridge such that a portion of the sleeve is sandwiched between the retaining element and the ridge. As now recited, at least a portion of the sleeve is compressed within the retaining element as a result of having slid the retaining element over the sleeve.

None of the references teach or suggest "sliding the retaining element over the sleeve and toward the ridge, such that a portion of the sleeve is sandwiched between the retaining element and the ridge", as recited by amended independent Claim 1. With respect to the Guillou '732

patent, a collar or thimble 12 is mounted on the end of a conduit 10 and is subsequently deformed as the conduit is connected to a coupling muff 2 by a collet 7 so as to seal the joint. As set forth on page 2 of the Official Action, the Examiner considers the collar or thimble to be the edge trim. Largely as a result of the underlying structure of the conduit, the collar or thimble is shaped to have a pair of conical surfaces that taper radially outward from the opposed ends of the collar or thimble toward a medial portion of a collar or thimble. Thus, the point at which the conical surfaces abut one another could be considered a ridge that extends outwardly, at least prior to the insertion of the conduit into the sleeve. As the conduit is inserted into a conical recess defined by the sleeve, however, the collar or thimble is deformed so as to assume a complementary conical shape as shown in Figure 3 of the Guillou '732 patent. Thus, that portion of the collar or thimble that could be considered a ridge moves lengthwise as a result of the deformation of the collar or thimble. As a result, following the insertion of the conduit into the sleeve, the portion of the collar or thimble that extends most radially outward and could arguably be considered a ridge resides in the space between the sleeve and the collet.

Since that portion of the collar or thimble that might be considered an outwardly extending ridge is positioned in the space between the sleeve and the collet following the insertion of the conduit into the sleeve, the sleeve does not cover the ridge on the edge trim as recited by independent Claim 1. Moreover, the sleeve is not sandwiched between the retaining element, i.e. the collet, and the ridge as also recited by independent Claim 1. Instead, the ridge is positioned within the space between the sleeve and the collet such that no portion of the sleeve covers the ridge and, consequently, no portion of the sleeve is sandwiched between the retaining element and the ridge.

With respect to the Demler '292 patent and, in particular, the embodiment of the Demler '292 patent depicted in Figures 7 and 8 and relied upon by the Official Action, a ferrule member 33 is inserted into the end of the plastic lining 32 of the pipe member 31. The end of the pipe member with the ferrule member inserted therein is then inserted into a sleeve 1 and another ferrule member 2' is slid over and engaged by the sleeve so as to secure the end of the pipe member within the sleeve. The Official Action considers the ferrule member 33 to be the edge trim with the flanged end 34 of the ferrule member 33 constituting a ridge. Moreover, the

Official Action considers the ferrule member 2' to be the retaining element. Once the retaining element has been slid over the sleeve as shown in Figure 8 of the Demler '292 patent, however, the sleeve is not sandwiched between the retaining member, i.e., the ferrule member 2', and the ridge formed by the flanged end 34 of the ferrule member 33, as recited by independent Claim 1. Instead, the flanged end 34 of ferrule member 33 is further inboard within the sleeve than the ferrule member 2' such that the ferrule member 2' does not overlie the flanged end of the ferrule member 33 and the sleeve is not sandwiched therebetween, as recited by independent Claim 1. Applicants also note that the Steimle '407 patent does not teach or suggests the portion of the sleeve being sandwiched between a retaining element and a ridge as recited by independent Claim 1.

Additionally, none of the cited references teach or suggests that sliding a retaining element over the sleeve and toward the ridge compresses the sleeve within the retaining element as now recited by amended independent Claim 1. In this regard, the Guillou '732 patent does not teach or suggests that the coupling muff 2 is compressed as the collet 7 is threadably advanced onto the coupling muff. Instead, the coupling muff appears to be formed of a relatively rigid material as the only compression or displacement that is described by the Guillou '732 patent is the deformation of the collar or thimble as the conduit is inserted into the conical recess defined by the coupling muff. Additionally, the sleeve of the Demler '292 patent is described to be preferably molded from a plastic material and is not described to be compressed in any manner as a result of having slid the retaining element thereover. Furthermore, the Steimle '407 patent also does not teach or suggest the compression of any type of sleeve in response to having slid a retaining element thereover.

For each of the forgoing reasons, it is submitted that amended independent Claim 1 is not taught or suggested by the cited references, taken either individually or in combination. Since dependent Claim 2, 6 and 7 include each of the recitations of amended independent Claim 1, it is also submitted that dependent Claims 2, 6 and 7 are not taught or suggested by the cited references, taken individually or in combination, for at least the same reasons as described above in conjunction with amended independent Claim 1. Thus, the rejections of Claims 1, 2 and 6 are therefore overcome.

Appl. No.: 10/696;821

Amdt. dated 09/26/2005

Reply to Office action of March 25, 2005



CONCLUSION

In view of the amended claims and the remarks presented above, it is respectfully submitted that all the claims in the present application are in condition for immediate allowance. It is therefore respectfully requested that a Notice of Allowance be issued. The Examiner is encouraged to contact Applicants' undersigned attorney to resolve any remaining issues in order to expedite examination of present application.

It is not believed that extensions of time or fees for net addition of claims are required, beyond those that may otherwise be provided for in documents accompanying this paper. However, in the event that additional extensions of time are necessary to allow consideration of this paper, such extensions are hereby petitioned under 37 CFR § 1.136(a), and any fee required therefore (including fees for net addition of claims) is hereby authorized to be charged to Deposit Account No. 16-0605.

Respectfully submitted,

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